

## KNOWLEDGE AND JOUISSANCE



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Psychoanalysis shares a problem with a number of the social sciences and humanities, though this may not be immediately apparent.<sup>1</sup> Psychoanalysts, in their work with patients, often find that, despite myriad interpretations and explanations—which both analyst and analysand may find convincing, and even inspired—the patients’ symptoms do not go away. A purely linguistic or interpretative analysis of the events and experiences surrounding the formation of the symptom does not suffice to eliminate it.

Freud noticed this early on in his work and even formalized it initially by saying that analysis falls into two stages: one stage in which the analyst presents the patient with fine explanations of her symptoms, and a second in which change finally occurs, the patient taking up the material of her own analysis herself. Later, Freud formulated the problem differently, in terms of what he called “an economic factor”: a powerful force must be holding the patient’s symptom in place—the patient must be deriving considerable satisfaction from it (even if it is, as Freud qualifies it, a “substitute” satisfaction).

This brings up the fundamental distinction that Freud makes between representation and affect. For example, if we hypnotize a patient, we can elicit all kinds of representations from him—we can get him to remember the most minute details of events that he cannot remember at all while awake, we can get him to put into words many aspects of his history—but often nothing changes. When we wake him up from hypnosis, he remembers nothing more than before, and the symptoms that seem to be tied to those events often remain intact. It is only when the patient is able to articulate his history and *feel something* at the same time—some emotion or affect—that change occurs.

Representation without affect is thus sterile. This is one of the reasons for the sterility of so-called “self-analysis”: you tell yourself lovely stories about the past, you analyze your dreams and fantasies to yourself or on paper, but nothing happens, nothing changes. It is all very informative and interesting; you remember all kinds of things about your past, but there is no metamorphosis. Affect is rarely brought into play without the presence of another person to whom you address all of these thoughts, dreams, and fantasies.

Lacan translates Freud’s fundamental distinction between representation and affect as the distinction between language and libido, between signifier and *jouissance*, and his whole discussion of the subject—of who or what the subject is in psychoanalysis—has to do with this fundamental distinction or disjunction.

Freud had already grappled with where to locate representation and affect. He came up with various overlapping topographies of the mind, assigning representation to the ego and affect to the id, affect being discharged through the drives said to be part and parcel of the id. The superego did not quite fit, however, given its use of representations—imperatives, critiques, and so on—combined with a stern moral tone suggesting that the superego has a little too much fun when it berates the ego. Freud’s earlier attempt to divide up the mind had left affect out of the picture altogether: the conscious-preconscious-unconscious topography suggests that representations can be found at all three levels, but what of affect? Freud is led here, inconsistently, I would argue, to suggest that affects can be unconscious, whereas most of his theoretical work goes in the direction of saying that only a representation can be unconscious.<sup>2</sup>

We might say that Lacan polarizes the representation/affect opposition more explicitly than Freud, though it is not always indicated as such in his work. While Lacan talks about *the* subject, we might say—following Jacques-Alain Miller’s articulation in his seminar “Donc” (1993–1994)—that there are actually two subjects in Lacan’s work: the subject of the signifier and the subject of *jouissance*.<sup>3</sup> Or at least two faces of the subject.

The subject of the signifier is what might be called the “Lévi-Straussian subject,” in that this subject contains knowledge or acts on knowledge without having any idea that he is doing so. You ask him why he built a hut in his village in such and such a place, and the answer he gives seems to have nothing to do with the fundamental oppositions that structure his world and effectively order his village’s layout. In other words, the “Lévi-Straussian subject” lives and acts on the basis of a knowledge he does not know, of which he is unaware. It lives him, in a sense. It is found in him without our having to rely on what he is consciously aware of.

This is the same kind of knowledge discovered via hypnosis, and in the end it seems not to require a subject at all, in the usual sense of the term. It is what Lacan, in “Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire” (1960), calls the subject of the combinatory: there is a combinatory of oppositions provided by the person’s language, family, and society, and that combinatory functions (*Écrits*, 806).<sup>4</sup> In “Science and Truth” (1965), Lacan refers to this subject as the

“subject of science” (ibid., 862), the subject that can be studied by science, and claims, paradoxically, that “the subject upon which we operate in psychoanalysis can only be the subject of science” (ibid., 858): the pure subject of the combinatory, the pure subject of language. (This is the strictly positional subject of game theory, the subject that falls under the “conjectural sciences.”)

This claim is a bit disingenuous, for while it is true that psychoanalysis relies only on language to achieve the effects it seeks—language being its only medium—it nevertheless seeks to have an effect on affect, on the subject as affect, libido, or jouissance. One of the difficulties one encounters in reading Lacan’s work is that he rarely specifies which subject he’s talking about at any one time, preferring to slip surreptitiously from one meaning to the other. I would suggest that, in “Science and Truth,” when Lacan talks about the “object,” he is referring to the subject as affect, whereas when he talks about the “subject,” he means the subject as structure, as the pure subject of the combinatory.

Thus at the outset here I want to distinguish between the subject of the signifier and the subject of the drives (or the subject as jouissance).

The first thing to be noted is that it is much easier to deal with the first than with the second. The second *n’est pas commode*, is not easy to get a handle on. This led many post-Freudian analysts to look for other ways of dealing with what we might call the J-factor, the jouissance factor. (Wilhelm Reich, at a certain stage of his work, figured, “Why not just deal with it directly, by direct contact with the patient’s body? Why bother to work it out via speech?”)

Contemporary cognitive-behavioral approaches to psychology can probably be understood as restricting their attention to the first as opposed to the second and, indeed, many cognitive-behavioral psychologists seem not to comprehend even intuitively that they are missing something: everything is supposed to be rational, there being no need for, and certainly no room for, anything else in their system. They seek out and “correct” or destroy “irrational beliefs.” I am not saying this is true of all of them, but in my experience it is true of many cognitive-behavioral therapies.

Linguistics—that newborn science that Lacan was so infatuated with in the 1950s, thinking it could serve at the outset as a model for the kind of scientificity proper to psychoanalysis, in other words, that psychoanalysis could become a science along the lines of a science such as linguistics—restricts its attention to the subject of the signifier. The same is true of all structuralist discourses: the structuralist project, as Lacan himself shows in some of his work from the 1950s, is to draw knowledge out of the pure subject of the signifier, to elicit and map the knowledge inscribed therein.

In the early 1970s, Lacan suggests a new term for what he himself does with language, for what he does is not the same as linguistics: he calls it “linguistricks” (Seminar XX, 20/15).<sup>5</sup> He does not draw out the knowledge contained in language, in grammar and idioms, for example; he uses language to have effects on something other than the pure subject of the signifier.

## SPEECH

Now there must be some convergence or overlap between the subject of the signifier and the subject of jouissance if changes can be wrought in the second via the first. Lacan notices early on that the two come together in speech. Speech relies on the system of signifiers (or simply on “the signifier,” as he is wont to say), borrowing its lexicon and grammar from it, and yet speech requires something else: enunciation. It has to be enunciated, and there is a bodily component that thus gets introduced: breathing and all of the movements of the jaw, tongue, and so on required for the production of speech.<sup>6</sup>

Linguistics can study and account for the subject of the enunciated or subject of the statement—for example, “I” in the sentence “I think so”—that is known in linguistics as the “shifter,” and it notes the difference between the subject of the statement and the enunciating subject. For example, if, repeating Freud, I say, “Psychoanalysis is an impossible profession,” the subject of the statement is “psychoanalysis,” whereas Bruce Fink is the enunciating subject. Linguistics is forced to take cognizance of that distinction.

But linguistics does not, it seems to me, deal with the enunciating subject *per se*. The enunciating subject is the one who may take pleasure in speaking, or find it painful to speak, or who may make a slip while speaking. The enunciating subject is the one who may let slip something that is revealing as to his or her feelings, desires, or pleasures.

Thus speech is one of the places these two subjects collide.

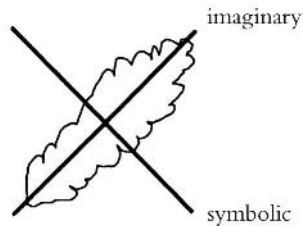
I mentioned earlier that psychoanalysis shares a problem with a number of the social sciences, and before I go any further into my discussion of Lacan here, I want to suggest what I, from my own amateurish perspective, see this common ground to be. It strikes me, for example, that these same two subjects collide in economics on the stock market floor. Can we not equate the subject of the signifier with the supposedly “rational” economic subject of the market, *homo oeconomicus*? Who then is the subject of jouissance? Is it not the subject who is taxed by U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan “with irrational exuberance” for bidding up stock prices “beyond all reason”? “Irrational exuberance” is an expression that has been repeated thousands of times in the media since December of 1997 when Greenspan first said it, and I would suggest that the very number of times it has been reiterated indicates that “irrational exuberance” is the very name of jouissance in the economic arena, the potlatch of our times—probably not the only potlatch, of course, but a significant one all the same.

If speech is where the two subjects collide or come together in psychoanalysis, it also is because psychoanalysis constitutes itself as a speech situation, that is, a situation in which most other forms of action are excluded at the outset. It is not a group situation, in which the mass behavior of groups might have to be taken into account—mass hysteria, rioting, pillaging, stock buying, and so on (unless waiting room behavior is, for some reason, considered part and parcel of the analytic situation itself).

## LACAN'S EARLY WORK REVISITED

In Lacan's very first model or graph of the analytic situation, the L Schema—based on a model provided in Lévi-Strauss' *Structural Anthropology*<sup>7</sup>—Lacan depicts the two subjects that I have been talking about as being at loggerheads (I am simplifying it here):

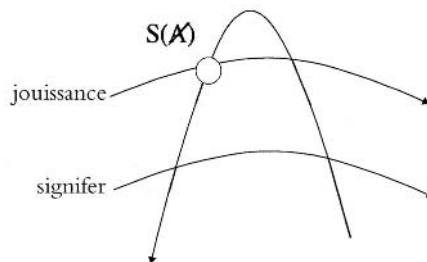
**FIGURE 1.1**  
**Simplified L Schema**



The imaginary register, at this point in Lacan's work, corresponds to the subject's jealous rage, envy, and rivalry. It is tantamount to what Lacan later calls the subject's "jealousness" (Seminar XX, 91/100), combining "jealousy" and "jouissance." The idea, at that stage, was that through speech, jealousy could be dissipated, worked through, resolved—in a word, eliminated. In the collision between the subject of the signifier and the subject of jouissance, the latter had to be gotten rid of. The latter got in the way of the former, providing a kind of interference for the former.

In 1960, in "Subversion of the Subject," Lacan provides a complex "Graph of Desire" in which we see the advent of the subject in language in the lower half of the graph and its intersection with jouissance at the top of the graph.

**FIGURE 1.2**  
**Simplified Graph of Desire**



The subject follows a pathway starting from the bottom right-hand corner and intersects first the signifying chain (bottom arrow) and then jouissance (top arrow). That second intersection is fraught with trouble, for the first thing the

subject encounters there is that there is no signifier that can account for or answer for his or her jouissance:  $S(\bar{A})$ . One's jouissance is without rhyme or reason, one might say.

One finds oneself inhabited by drives with no why or wherefore. It is not my intention to go into the complexities of this encounter here, since I have done so elsewhere;<sup>8</sup> the important point is that the subject's predicament between the signifier (lower level) and jouissance (upper level) is no picnic, as it is depicted by Lacan: there is no sort of easy alliance between them.

I am not by any means leading up to some way in which to reconcile these two subjects, or hoping to introduce any particular formulation that shows how the two can be made to get along, so to speak. It is obvious that in psychoanalysis, we deal with the subject of jouissance through the medium of speech, and that we attempt to use speech in ways that bring about some sort of change when it comes to the jouissance of symptoms that the analysand complains of.

But since this chapter is not intended to be primarily clinical, that is not the direction I will take here. I mention it simply because it seems to me that *many* other fields in the humanities and social sciences have to come to terms with these *two* faces of the subject in theory building and praxis—no doubt in different ways than psychoanalysis, due to the different aims that inform each field.<sup>9</sup> Having sketched out the two different subjects at stake in much of Lacan's work, the subject of the signifier and the subject of jouissance, let me turn now to knowledge insofar as it is associated with the first of these subjects.

## KNOWLEDGE IN A PRESCIENTIFIC CONTEXT

Over the course of at least twenty years, Lacan focuses on what might be called a prescientific type of knowledge and attempts to distinguish it from knowledge in a modern scientific context. That prescientific type of knowledge is associated by Lacan with Aristotelian science, a type of science that precedes the shifts often referred to as the Copernican revolution, though they were not made by Copernicus himself.

Now why does Lacan focus on that and come back to it again and again in an almost obsessive sort of way? Is it not a moot point, of interest only to the history of science? Is Lacan a closet historian in his nonanalytic moments?

I think Lacan's motive here is that psychoanalysis has had a difficult time detaching itself from both philosophy and psychology, both in the public mind and in the minds of analysts, and it keeps slipping into all kinds of prescientific constructs, all kinds of simplistic forms of pseudo-science and age-old philosophical notions. If psychoanalysis is to be something more credible than modern psychology—which leads to a proliferation of nosological categories as glorious as “imagined ugliness disorder” (known as Body Dysmorphic Disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV)—then it has to examine what science is all about, not simply what people think it is all about.

Modern science, for example, is ostensibly about measurement and the production of “hard facts,” and thus virtually the entire American psychological establishment has enlisted itself in the production of measures and statistics of all kinds.

But is that the kind of scientificity that psychoanalysis can hope to achieve or even wish to achieve? The *APA Monitor*, the main organ of the American Psychological Association, occasionally lists which aspects of Freud’s theories have been borne out by empirical research: of course, when we consider what they have reduced Freud’s theories to in order to test them, and then examine the research design that they have come up with to test such watered-down theories, we may well wonder whether the supposed confirmations are of any more value than the alleged refutations!

According to Lacan, this is not at all the kind of scientificity at which psychoanalysis must aim: to his mind, psychoanalysis is not currently a science, and it is not by going in that direction that it will become one. “It is not what is measured in science that is important, contrary to what people think” (Seminar XX, 116/128). We shall see what he thinks *is* important in science in a moment.

But first let us turn to Lacan’s comments about Antiquity’s view of knowledge. I do not profess to be an expert on Antiquity or the history of science in any sense; I simply want to summarize what I think Lacan’s main points are here and why they are pertinent to psychoanalysis.

Antiquity’s view of the world is based on a fantasy, Lacan suggests, the fantasy of a preexisting harmony between mind (*nous*) and the world (Seminar XX, 116/128), between what man thinks and the world he thinks about, between the relations between the words with which he talks about the world and the relations existing in the world itself.

Modern science has rather decisively broken with this notion, presuming, if anything, the inadequacy of our preexisting language to characterize nature and the need for new concepts, new words, and new formulations. And yet, curiously enough, in the psychoanalytic journals, we find articles by the likes of Jules H. Massermann (“Language, Behaviour and Dynamic Psychiatry,” *International Journal of Psycho-analysis* XXV, 1–2) [1944]: 1–8), who discovers, according to Lacan, “with an unequalled naïveté, the verbatim correspondence of the grammatical categories of his childhood to relations found in reality” (*Écrits*, 274). In other words, in the middle of the twentieth century, one finds an unquestioning approach to language and the categories and relations it provides in studies produced by analysts. This most prescientific of presumptions is still found in much of psychology today.<sup>10</sup>

Now the fantasy that characterized Antiquity’s view of the world goes quite far, according to Lacan: it is—and I do not think he was the first to say so—all about copulation (Seminar XX, 76/82), all an elaborate metaphor for relations between the sexes. Form penetrates or inseminates matter; form is active and matter passive; there *is* a relationship, a fundamental relationship,

between form and matter, active and passive, the male principle and the female principle. All knowledge at that time, participated, in Lacan's words, "in the fantasy of an inscription of the sexual link" (Seminar XX, 76/82), in the fantasy that there is such a thing as a sexual relationship, and that this link or relationship is verified all around us. The relation between knowledge and the world was consubstantial with a fantasy of copulation.

Surely no such fantasy could be at work in psychoanalysis today! But the fact is, if there is one primordial fantasy at work in psychoanalysis today it is that a harmonious relationship between the sexes *must* be possible. This view is based on what is thought to be a teleological perspective in Freud's work, a teleology that supposedly grows out of the "progression" of libidinal stages known as the oral, anal, and genital stages. Whereas in the oral and anal stages, the child relates to partial objects, not to another person as a whole, in the genital stage, post-Freudian analysts have claimed that the child relates to another person as a whole person, not as a collection of partial objects.

A thick volume was devoted to such notions in France in the mid-1950s, *La psychanalyse d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), in which a whole generation of analysts put forward the idea that when one successfully reaches the genital stage, a perfectly harmonious state is reached in which one takes one's sexual partner as a subject, not an object, as a Kantian end-in-himself or herself, not as a means to an end. And the crowning achievement of this stage is that one becomes what they call "oblativ" —truly altruistic, that is, capable of doing things for another person without any thought of the advantages it may bring to oneself.

Had that generation of analysts ever seen anything of the sort? It would be hard to believe. Nevertheless, those analysts did not hesitate to postulate such a perfect state of harmony between the sexes and the total elimination of narcissism and selfishness, and to push genital relations as selfless and oral and anal relations as selfish in their work with their analysands. Even though no one had ever seen such a thing, *it had to exist*.

In other words, it was yet another fantasy, distorting psychoanalytic theory and practice. (I doubt that anyone needs to be reminded that a similar fantasy is at work in contemporary psychology, at least in its most popular forms: the by-now absolute best-selling pop psychology book of all times, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. The title itself seems promising, suggesting that there is *nothing that predestines men and women for complementary relations*. But everything in the book after the first two chapters is designed to help the reader overcome difference and establish *the One that has to be*, the One that the age-old fantasy requires.)

Lacan's goal is to eliminate all such fantasies from psychoanalytic theory and practice. That is, of course, easier said than done, which is precisely why the study of the history of science takes on such great importance in any field that would like to become scientific at some point up the road, purging itself of



unscientific elements—if one does not know the history of one's field, one is likely to repeat it.

The fantasy of harmony between the sexes has a long and distinguished lineage, insofar as we can trace it back to at least Plato's *Symposium*, where we see Aristophanes put forward the view that once we were all spherical beings lacking in nothing, but Zeus split us in two, and now we are all in search of our other half. We divided beings yearn to be grafted back together, failing which we at least find relief in each other's arms (thanks to Zeus having taken pity on us, turning our private parts around to the inside). As Aristophanes says, "Love thus seeks to refind our early estate, endeavoring to combine two into one and heal the human sore" (Loeb edition, 1967, 141). Love is what can make good the primordial split, and harmony can be achieved thereby.

A belief in a possible harmony not only at some primordially lost moment in human history (garden of Eden [phylogenesis]) or individual time (mother-child relation [ontogenesis]) but *now* can be found in contemporary Jungian psychology in the West and in certain Chinese religions in the East (e.g., in the notion of Yin and Yang).

Aristophanes' image of us as originally spherical beings also points to the sphere as the shape that was considered most perfect, most harmonious, lacking in nothing. A great deal of ancient cosmology and astronomy up until Kepler's time was based on the fantasy of the perfection of the sphere, and much "scientific" work was devoted to *saving the truth (salva veritate)* by showing how the noncircular phenomena could be explained on the basis of movement in accordance with that shape of shapes, the circle. Epicycles were employed even by Copernicus, and thus the Copernican revolution was not as Copernican as all that. All Copernicus said was, if we put the sun at the center of the world, we can simplify the calculations—which in that case meant something like reducing the number of epicycles from sixty to thirty.

According to Lacan, it is not such a move, which keeps entirely intact the notions of center and periphery, that can constitute a revolution: things keep revolving just as before. It is the introduction by Kepler of a not so perfect shape, the ellipse, that shakes things up a bit, problematizing the notion of the center. The still more important move after that, as Lacan sees it, is the idea that if a planet moves toward a point (a focus) that is empty, it is not so easy to describe that as turning or circling, as it had been called in the past: perhaps it is something more like falling. This is where Newton comes in. Instead of saying what everyone else had been saying for millennia—"it turns"—Newton says, "it falls."

Despite this Newtonian revolution, Lacan claims that for most of us, our "world view . . . remains perfectly spherical" (Seminar XX, 42/42). Despite the Freudian revolution that removes consciousness from the center of our view of ourselves, it ineluctably slips back to the center, or a center is ineluctably reestablished somewhere. The "decentering" psychoanalysis requires is difficult

to sustain, Lacan says (Seminar XX, 42/42), and analysts keep slipping back into the old center/periphery way of thinking. Hence the need for another “subversion,” the Lacanian subversion.

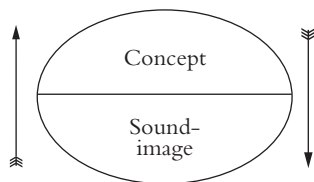
One of the main points of “Subversion of the Subject” is that the subject is *not* someone who knows but rather someone who does not know. Despite Freud’s emphasis on the unconscious, on a knowledge known unbeknownst to the conscious, thinking subject—that is, the ego—despite Freud’s emphasis on a knowledge that is inscribed, registered, recorded somewhere, but that is not, strictly speaking, known by anyone, analysts have reverted to the idea of a conscious self: an ego endowed with synthetic functions, an ego that plays an active role in “integrating reality” and mediating between the tempestuous drives of the id and the severe moral strictures of the superego—in a word, an agent imbued with intentionality and efficacy (a notion of the ego found primarily in Freud’s later works).

The radicality of Freud’s initial move has been lost or covered over, and it is difficult to keep such fantasies from sneaking in the back door. Lacan suggests that the importance of the unknowing subject is found virtually every step of the way in Freud’s work. Why, Lacan asks, of all the ancient myths in which a man kills his father and sleeps with his mother known at Freud’s time—and there were apparently quite a number of them—did Freud chose Oedipus? His answer: because *Oedipus did not know he had done those things* (Seminar VIII, 122). Oedipus was thus a perfect model for the unknowing subject, for a subject who acts without knowing why, in any conscious sense of the word “knowing.” From the vantage point of psychoanalysis, “There’s no such thing as a knowing subject” (Seminar XX, 114/126), says Lacan.

## KNOWLEDGE AND THE WHOLE

There seems to be something incredibly compelling to us about the visual realm and the images we encounter in that realm: the image of the circle (or at least of the egg or ellipse) returns to haunt us even in Saussure’s model of the sign, to turn for a moment to other discourses than that of psychoanalysis.

**FIGURE 1.3**  
**The Saussurian Sign**



According to Saussure, the signifier and the signified, the sound-image and the concept, are indissolubly tied together. As Saussure says, “the two elements

[concept (signified) and sound-image (signifier)] are *intimately united*";<sup>11</sup> they seem, in the image he provides for the sign, to form a whole. This is an encapsulated sign, a sign in which the signifier and signified do not diverge dangerously or uncontrollably, forming instead a Yin-Yang-like configuration. I am leaving out here the complexities that stem from the multiple relations among different signs in order to focus on this way of conceptualizing, visualizing, or representing the sign itself.

Lacan begins his forays into linguistics by subverting the Saussurian sign: there is no harmonious, totalizing relationship between signifier and signified, he says. The signifier dominates the signified, and there is a genuine barrier between the two that abolishes the reciprocal arrows that Saussure provides, suggesting a kind of mutuality or possibility that each order may have comparable effects on the other. Lacan subverts the sign in that way already in "Instance of the Letter" (1956)<sup>12</sup> and takes that subversion further still in the 1970s, repeatedly emphasizing the barrier or bar between the two realms and the fact that the signifier creates the signified, brings the signified into being (Seminar XX, 35/34). He strives to dissipate the hold that Saussure's image of the sign has on us.

When Lacan takes up the theme of history, it is clear that he objects to Hegel's attempt to find some sort of totalizing meaning or teleology in history. Lacan is generally suspicious of the whole and is ever pointing to the hole in every whole, to the gap in every psychoanalytic theory that attempts to account for everything, whether to explain the whole of the patient's world or to reduce all of psychoanalytic experience to, say, a relationship between two bodies (in a "two-body psychology") or to a "communication situation."

Psychoanalysts seem to have a fatal attraction to such totalizing explanations, but they are probably not alone in that regard. Even in a field as abstract and seemingly free of the seduction of images and the imaginary as modern physics, there is an increasing interest, it seems, in "theories of everything," a "unified field theory" that would take into account or account for all forces known and knowable. That strikes me as quite fanciful, as involving a view of scientific knowledge based on an image like that of the sphere—even if it is an *n*-dimensional sphere—as opposed to an image based on a Klein bottle, say, or a Möbius strip.

Which is, in fact, at least one of the reasons Lacan introduces such images in his work in the early 1960s: to encourage his audience to stop thinking in terms of circles and spheres, and to think instead in terms of surfaces that are less easily graspable in terms of categories such as inside and outside, front side and back side, body and orifice (see especially Seminar IX). The notion of the world as constituting a whole, Lacan says, is based on "a view, a gaze, or an imaginary hold" (Seminar XX, 43/43), a view of a sphere from the outside, as it were—as though the world were over to one side, and we were here looking at it from *some privileged outside point*. But are we on the inside or the outside of a Möbius strip? It is more difficult to situate oneself in terms of some sort of

exteriority when such surfaces are taken as models, yet even those surfaces remain images and keep psychoanalysis rooted in the imaginary. Even the knots Lacan introduces in Seminar XX, some twelve years later, partake of the visual, though they are perhaps still harder to picture in the mind.

Lacan, in his attempt to get us to leave behind the visual, is led to the letter. If Kepler shook us out of our old Copernican ways of thinking by introducing the ellipse, Newton took us further still by introducing a kind of writing:

$$F = g \frac{mm'}{d^2}.$$

This, according to Lacan, “is what rips us away from the imaginary function” (Seminar XX, 43/43).

### FORMALIZATION WITHOUT MATHEMATIZATION

One way beyond fantasy is the reduction to letters. Indeed, in Seminar XX, Lacan says, “Nothing seems to better constitute the horizon of analytic discourse than the use made of the letter by mathematics” (Seminar XX, 44/44); note that in mathematics, many of the letters do not have the kinds of meanings they have even in physics, where  $m$  stands for mass. Mathematicians such as Bertrand Russell have been quoted as saying that the letters they use have no meaning, and to be devoid of meaning is to be devoid of the imaginary (as Lacan says, “meaning is imaginary,” Seminar III, 65).

While Lacan ultimately concludes that, “The analytic thing will not be mathematical” (Seminar XX, 105/117), he nevertheless spends many years attempting to provide symbols—which he refers to as *mathemes*—with which to summarize and formalize psychoanalytic theory:  $\S$ ,  $a$ ,  $i(a)$ ,  $A$ ,  $(\S \diamond a)$ ,  $(\S \diamond D)$ ,  $S(\mathbb{A})$ ,  $\Phi$ , and so on. It is in part an attempt to formulate certain structures in as rigorous a manner as analysis is currently able to. The symbols he introduces have nothing to do with measurement and thus cannot be replaced by numbers, as in Newton’s formula for force and gravitation. And yet, when one is familiar with their multiple meanings, they seem to summarize a good deal of theorization in a very condensed form. Lacan’s goal here does not seem to be to provide a mathematization of psychoanalysis but rather a formalization. Formalization seems, at least at this stage of Lacan’s work, to be a possible way of moving toward scientificity and is what Lacan finds most important about science—far more important than measurement.

In physics, formalization allowed theorists an independent field of speculation: one could play with the formulas themselves and work out all of their interrelations, without having the slightest idea what the new configurations meant or implied. One could make certain assumptions not because they made any sort of intuitive sense but simply because they simplified equations; those

assumptions could then be tested through experimentation. But the formalization itself allowed for new breakthroughs; it gave physicists *a basis for a non-intuitive, nonimage based, nonimaginary approach to their field*. Indeed, modern physics became so far removed from any intuitive understanding of the phenomena supposedly under investigation that, rather than new theoretical advances being designed to explain or account for the phenomena, often it took time to think of what never before noticed phenomena might in fact validate the theories. To give an example from my limited knowledge of the development of physics, no one had ever noticed that the sun bends the light that comes to us from Venus until modern physics posited the matter-like nature of photons and the sun's gravitational pull on them. If I am not mistaken, I believe that there are still aspects of Einstein's theories that have yet to be tested.

Obviously there is no such formalization of psychoanalysis in the offing that would allow for such an independent basis of theorization, but Lacan situates it at the horizon of a form of psychoanalysis that would like to become scientific. How such a formalization could function independently if it did not simultaneously involve mathematization is hard to say, but he seems to think that set theory provides a model for *formalization without mathematization*, set theory being a kind of logic that can be used to generate many different areas of mathematics.

One of the paradoxes of the kind of field that psychoanalysis is is that—unlike a field such as physics, in which physicists need never read the original texts written by Newton, Maxwell, Lorenz, or Einstein, learning all they need to know in order to “do” or “practice” physics by reading ordinary textbooks or simply by going to classes—in psychoanalysis, Freud's texts remain unsurpassed, indispensable reading (at least they should be!). It is not as if later work in the field could somehow subsume all of Freud's contributions and pass them on in the form of a series of formulas that anyone could learn and use.

In Lacan's work, we see a two-pronged approach: we see Lacan attempt to reduce his own work and Freud's to mathemes—indeed, he ironically claims at one point to have reduced all of psychoanalysis to set theory—and yet we see a kind of “fetishization” of the text, so to speak: on the one hand, an approach to reading Freud's and other texts (e.g., Poe's “The Purloined Letter”) that has spurred great interest in the humanities and in literary criticism in particular and, on the other hand, an attention to writing that seeks to have effects on the reader that imply anything but the direct transmission of formulas and mathematically precise equations.

In Lacan's own writing, we see an explosion of polysemia, double entendres, triple entendres, equivocations, evocations, enigmas, jokes, and so on. His texts and lectures seem designed to introduce us to the very kind of work analysis itself requires, sifting through layers of meaning, deciphering the text as though it were a long series of slips of the tongue. He says at one point that his writing style is deliberately designed to contribute to the training of analysts

(“All of my rhetoric aims to contribute to the effect of training,” *Écrits*, 722), but it no doubt goes further than that. His writing affects us and, in certain cases, even upsets us.

If we think in terms of the distinction between the subject of the signifier—the subject of the pure combinatory or Lévi-Straussian subject—and the subject of *jouissance*, we might say, facetiously, that the mathemes are produced by Lacan as the subject of science, while the endless punning is produced by Lacan as the subject of *jouissance*, the enjoying subject. But then again, he seems to have at least as much fun with his mathemes as with his witticisms.<sup>13</sup>

### KNOWLEDGE BEGINS WITH A DEFICIENCY OF JOUISSANCE

Having discussed knowledge a little—above all, the attempt to eliminate the fantasies that keep creeping back into what we might call psychoanalytic knowledge—let me turn now to *jouissance*.

In his discussion of Aristotle, Lacan says that knowledge finds its motor force in a deficiency of *jouissance* (Seminar XX, 52/54–55).<sup>14</sup> We find the pleasures available to us in life inadequate, and it is owing to that inadequacy that we expound systems of knowledge—perhaps, first and foremost, to explain why our pleasure is inadequate and then to propose how to change things so that it will not be. You can’t take the lack out of Lacan (as Shelly Silver used to say): knowledge is not motivated by some overflowing of life, some “natural exuberance.” Monkeys may show signs of such exuberance at various moments, but they do not create logics, mathematical systems, philosophies, or psychologies. Knowledge, according to Lacan, is motivated by some failure of pleasure, some insufficiency of pleasure: in a word, dissatisfaction.

The French title of Seminar XX reflects this; when we say, “*encore*,” we mean give us more, that is not enough, do it again (it means other things as well, but they do not concern us as directly here). It means that what we experienced was not sufficient.

Is it true that our *jouissance* is lesser than other people’s or other animals’? Do we really see other people around us who seem to enjoy more than we do? Perhaps occasionally. The argument often has been made that racism, sexism, homophobia, and religious intolerance are based on the *belief* that some other group enjoys more than another group does, whatever that group may be. Yet that belief usually is based on next to nothing: racists have rarely, if ever, seen any such thing in the peoples they discriminate against, but that does not stop them from believing it.

It seems that we do something animals could never do—we judge our *jouissance* against a standard of what we think *it should be*, against an absolute standard, a norm, a benchmark. Standards and benchmarks do not exist in the animal kingdom; they are made possible only by language. In other words, language is what allows us to think that the *jouissance* we obtain is not up to snuff, does not cut the mustard, is not what it should be.

Language is what allows us to *say* that there is the paltry satisfaction we get in various and sundry ways, and then another satisfaction, a better satisfaction, a satisfaction that would never fail us, never come up short, never disappoint us. Have we ever experienced such a reliable satisfaction? For most of us, the answer is probably no, but that does not stop us from believing that there must be such a thing—there must be something better. Maybe we think we see some sign of it in some *other* group of people—Jews, African Americans, gays, women—and we hate and envy them for it. Maybe we project it onto some group because we want to believe it exists somewhere. (I am obviously not trying to explain all aspects of racism, sexism, and so on here with this highly simplistic formulation.)

In any case, *we think that there must be something better, we say that there must be something better, we believe that there must be something better.* By saying it over and over, whether to ourselves, to our friends, or to our analysts, we give a certain consistency to this other satisfaction, this Other jouissance. In the end, we wind up giving it so much consistency that the jouissance we do in fact obtain seems all the more inadequate. The little we had diminishes further still. It pales in comparison with the ideal we hold up for ourselves of a jouissance that we could really count on, that would never let us down.

A lot of things prop up the belief in this kind of jouissance. Hollywood certainly props it up, attempting to give it a kind of consistency few of us have probably ever known. In Hollywood's depiction of sexual relations—and sex is not the only realm in question when Lacan talks about jouissance, but it is certainly one of the more palpable ones—there is something inevitable and reliable about the satisfaction that the actors ostensibly obtain, something so reliable that one could bet the farm on it. I am not suggesting that no one ever has sexual experiences like the ones depicted on the silver screen, but that virtually no one has them with such regularity, so *infallibly*.<sup>15</sup>

What is the status of this unflinching jouissance that could never miss the mark? It does not exactly exist, according to Lacan, but it *insists* as an ideal, an idea, a possibility thought permits us to envision. In his vocabulary, it “ex-sists”: it persists and makes its claims felt with a certain insistence from the outside, as it were. Outside in the sense that it is not the wish, “Let’s do *that* again!” but, rather, “Isn’t there something else you could do, something different you could try?”

When we think of the paltry jouissance we do have, this Other jouissance is the one we should have, the one that should be. Since we can conceive of its possibility, it must be. This resonates with Medieval philosophy: Anselm of Canterbury says that, “God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived.” And since existence must be one of the properties of the most perfect thing going, God has to exist, otherwise He would not be the most perfect thing going. Here we see the speciousness of the ontological argument: attempting to deduce existence from essence.

The idea of an Other *jouissance* is thus closely related to the idea of God. There is a kind of fantasy at work here: the fantasy that we could attain such perfect, total—indeed, we might even say spherical—satisfaction. That fantasy takes on various forms in Buddhism, Zen, Catholicism, Tantrism, and Mysticism, and it goes by various names: Nirvana, Ecstasy, and so on. (By calling it fantasy, I am not saying that it is necessarily unreal.)

The fantasy is so powerful that we feel this Other *jouissance* has to be, has to exist. Yet if it were not for this fantasy, we might be more content with the *jouissance* we do actually obtain. Thus while Lacan says that, according to the fantasy, this Other *jouissance* should be, should exist, from the point of view of the satisfactions we actually do obtain, it should not be because it merely makes matters worse. We might say that *it never fails to make matters worse*. That is the gist of the play on words that Lacan makes over and over again in Chapter 5 of Seminar XX, “c’est la *jouissance* qu’il ne faudrait pas” (a play on two different verbs, *falloir*, it must be, and *faillir*, to fail, that are written and pronounced identically in certain tenses): it is the idea of a *jouissance* that never fails and that never fails to diminish still further the little *jouissance* we already have.

These two *jouissances* (the paltry one and the Other) are not complementary, according to Lacan, otherwise “we would fall back into the whole” (Seminar XX, 68/73), the fantasy of complementarity, Yin and Yang, one for men, say, and one for women. Instead, they form a couple, if you will, akin to that constituted by being and nonbeing—recall how worked up the Greeks got over the *aporia* of the being of nonbeing.

## SEXUATION

The discussion of these two *jouissances* brings us to the subject of what Lacan calls “sexuation.” It should be recalled that sexuation is not biological sex: what Lacan calls masculine structure and feminine structure do not have to do with one’s biological organs but rather with the kind of *jouissance* that one is able to obtain.<sup>16</sup> There is not, to the best of my knowledge, any easy overlap between sexuation and “gender,” or between sexuation and “sexual identity,” or between sexuation and what is sometimes referred to as “sexual orientation.” “Gender” is a recent term in English usage and was utterly unknown in France in the early 1970s in anything other than a grammatical sense. When I refer to men, in the ensuing discussion, I mean those people who, regardless of their biological sex, fall under certain formulas—what Lacan calls the formulas of sexuation (see Figure 1.4)—the ones on the left; when I refer to women, I mean those people who, regardless of their biological sex, fall under the formulas on the right.

Lacan explicitly indicates here that he is attempting to define men and women in terms of a logic—hopefully not in terms of a fantasy (though a logic may well contain fantasy elements—Hegel’s logic involves the fantasy of the whole, of totalizability), certainly not in terms of chromosomes, and not even in terms of the Oedipus complex.<sup>17</sup>



Now Lacan refers to the two jouissances that I have been referring to thus far as phallic jouissance and the Other jouissance (or jouissance of the Other). I have avoided saying “phallic jouissance” thus far, not wanting to put a name on it, especially such a loaded name. Why, after all, call it phallic?

There are many reasons, some of which I have talked about at great length elsewhere, but here I would like to suggest that we try to understand “phallic” as “fallible,” to hear the fallibility in the phallus. Phallic jouissance is the jouissance that fails us, that disappoints us. It is susceptible to failure, and it fundamentally misses our partner. Why? Because it reduces our partner, as Other, to what Lacan refers to as object *a*, that partial object that serves as the cause of desire: our partner’s voice or gaze that turns us on, or that body part we enjoy in our partner. It can be represented with Lacan’s mathemes as  $S \rightarrow a$ , which is, in fact, what we find under the formulas in the table that Lacan provides (Seminar XX, 73/78). As Lacan says elsewhere in this seminar, “the object is a *râté*,” a missing, a failure: “The essence of the object is failure” (Seminar XX, 55/58).

To enjoy in this way, reducing one’s partner to object *a*, is to enjoy like a man—that is, in the sense of someone characterized by masculine structure. Lacan even makes a pun here, saying that this kind of jouissance is “homosexual,” spelling it with two m’s, *homme* being the term for man in French. Regardless of whether one is male or female (those are the biological terms), and regardless of whether one’s partner is male or female, to enjoy in this way is to enjoy *like* a man.

Regarding the term *phallus*, note that Lacan equates the phallus with the bar between the signifier and the signified (S/s) in Seminar XX (40/39). This should give us a sense of the high degree of abstraction that Lacan brings to this highly contested Freudian concept: how we could understand the bar or barrier between the signifier and the signified as being in any way related to the biological organ associated with the male of the species is truly difficult to see.<sup>18</sup> Why the barrier between the signifier and the signified? That barrier is such that there is a great deal of slippage between what I say I want in words or tell myself I want and the actual object I aim at. I tell my partner I want this, she gives it to me, and I say “That’s not it!” I want that. She gives me that, but that still is not it. Desire’s object will not sit still; desire always sets off in search of something else. Since desire is articulated, made of the stuff of language—at least that is Lacan’s contention, his certainly not being a naturalistic notion of desire—it has a very tough time designating any kind of exact signified or meaning, pinning something down. “I know that’s what I said I wanted, but that’s not exactly what I meant.”

There is a barrier between my desire for something as formulated or articulated in signifiers (S), and what can satisfy me.<sup>19</sup> Thus the satisfaction I take in realizing my desire is always disappointing. This satisfaction, subject to the bar between the signifier and the signified, *fails* to fulfill me—it always leaves something more to be desired. That is phallic jouissance. Just as one cannot take the

lack out of Lacan, one cannot take the failure out of the phallus. Phallic jouissance lets you down, comes up short. Lacan gives it a couple of other names in later seminars: he calls it “symbolic jouissance,” and even “semiotic jouissance.”

The Other jouissance, on the other hand, may be infallible, but it is a bit trickier: since Lacan often calls it *la jouissance de l'Autre*, it could be the jouissance that the Other gets out of us—after all, Lacan says we are duped by jouissance, *joués* (Seminar XX, 66/70), but then again it could be our enjoyment of the Other, or even our enjoyment as the Other (Seminar XX, 26/23–24). That ambiguity should be kept in mind as we turn to the formulas of sexuation themselves.

THE FORMULAS OF SEXUATION

In the mid-1960s, Lacan borrowed a number of symbols and terms from Gottlob Frege, the logician. Frege apparently uses the term *saturated* to talk about a function that has a variable,  $f(x)$ . Lacan borrows and extends this terminology to talk about the subject in “Science and Truth” (*Écrits*, 863).

The subject without an object is the pure, “unsaturated” subject of the signifier, whereas the subject with an object is the “saturated” subject of jouissance.  $\Phi x$ , in the formulas of sexuation, is a function, even though Lacan puts a  $\Phi$  in the place of the more usual  $f$  in  $f(x)$ . It is a function with a variable, and I think we can, at least at one level, read the variable “ $x$ ” here as “jouissance.”

FIGURE 1.4  
The Formulas of Sexuation

Men	Women
$\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$	$\overline{\exists x \Phi x}$
$\forall x \Phi x$	$\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$

With this new reading, the formulas can be understood as follows, assuming we keep in mind that Lacan does not use the universal and existential quantifiers in the same way that classical logic does:

- $\forall x \Phi x$ : All of man’s jouissance is phallic jouissance. Every single one of his satisfactions may come up short.
- $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ : Nevertheless, there is the belief in a jouissance that could never come up short, the belief in another jouissance.

This way of formulating things allows us to explain a number of comments that Lacan makes about Kierkegaard and Taoism. Kierkegaard, Lacan seems to

claim, thinks he can accede to love only by giving up his phallic jouissance. It is only if he stops reducing Woman, the Other (the Other sex, here, as Lacan says) to object  $a$ —it is only by renouncing the enjoyment he gets from object  $a$ —that he can attain something else, something Lacan describes as “a good at one remove” or “a good to the second power,” “a good that is not caused by a little  $a$ ” (Seminar XX, 71/77). Lacan refers to that as “castrating himself,” as it involves giving up the jouissance of the organ; Kierkegaard is seen to castrate himself *in order to attain the dimension of existence*. He seems to have to sacrifice one kind of love—love of object  $a$ —to achieve another kind of love, presumably a love that aims at something beyond object  $a$ .<sup>20</sup> (The formula in the upper left-hand corner is the only place existence comes in on the men’s side of the table.)

Turning from love to certain Taoist sexual practices, Lacan says that in Taoism, “one must withhold one’s cum” in order to achieve a higher or greater pleasure. In certain Tantric practices, orgasm is deferred, often for hours, and the sexual partners supposedly become surrounded by a kind of blue halo, indicative of a higher or heightened state of pleasure. Note that Lacan associates phallic jouissance with organ pleasure, the pleasure of the genitalia (Seminar XX, 13/7); the idea here would then seem to be that one must endlessly defer or altogether give up organ pleasure to obtain another kind of pleasure.

It would seem, according to these examples, that it is only through a certain kind of sacrifice that a man can attain an enjoyment beyond that of object  $a$ , an enjoyment that is presumably *of* the Other, of the Other sex (enjoyment of someone—usually, but not necessarily, a female—as a representative of or stand-in for the Other), and it is only by making such a sacrifice that he can truly love. Perhaps the courtly love tradition provides us with examples of this. As Lacan says, in this context, “When one loves, it has nothing to do with sex” (Seminar XX, 27/25).

Let us turn now to the formulas for women:

$\overline{\forall x\Phi x}$ : Not all of her jouissance is phallic jouissance.

$\overline{\exists x\Phi x}$ : There *is* not any that is not phallic jouissance—the emphasis going on the first “is.” All the jouissances that *do exist* are phallic, but that does not mean there cannot be some jouissances that are not phallic—it is just that they do not exist: they *ex-sist*. The Other jouissance can only *ex-sist*, it cannot exist, for to exist it would have to be spoken.

Why can’t the Other jouissance be spoken? If it were spoken, it would have to be articulated in signifiers, and if it were articulated in signifiers, it would be subject to the bar between signifier and signified. In other words, it would become fallible, capable of missing the mark. The bar brings on a disjunction between signifier and signified, the possibility—indeed, the inevitability—of slippage, noncorrespondence between signifier and signified. It brings on the whole signifying matrix, where a loss of jouissance is unavoidable (object  $a$ ).

$$\frac{S_1}{S} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a} \leftarrow \text{loss or product}$$

This is why, Lacan seems to suggest, the Other jouissance must remain ineffable. A recurrent theme in the writings of the mystics is that what they experience in moments of rapture and ecstasy simply cannot be described: it is ineffable. No words come at that moment. That is, presumably, why Lacan says women have not told the world more about this jouissance: it is inarticulable.

Is there anything that *can* be said about it? The most concrete thing Lacan says is that it corresponds to “making love,” as opposed to sexual intercourse (which is related to object *a*), “making love” being akin to poetry (Seminar XX, 68/72). He even says at one point in the seminar that it is “the satisfaction of speech” (ibid., 61/64). How that is compatible with the notion that it is an *ineffable* experience where the bar between signifier and signified does not function, I do not profess to know, though it seems to have to do with talking about love—for Lacan says, “to speak of love is in itself a jouissance” (ibid., 77/83)—instead of engaging in “the act of love,” that is, in sexual intercourse. That is, after all, what the courtly love tradition was all about: talking instead of sex, which might be qualified as a kind of sublimation that provided its own pleasures (“‘another satisfaction,’ the satisfaction of speech” [ibid., 61/64]).

Nor can I say why Lacan associates it specifically with women, characterizing it as a specifically feminine jouissance. We need not assume that there is some sort of complete unity or consistency to his work, for he adds to and changes things as he goes along. He says, for example, in chapter 1 that, “Jouissance, qua sexual, is phallic” (ibid., 14/9) but later qualifies object *a*, the “star” of phallic jouissance, as *a*-sexual (ibid., 115/127). So is phallic jouissance asexual or sexual? Is the Other jouissance sexual or asexual? It would seem to be sexual, because it reaches the Other sex as such, not just object *a*, and yet, “When one loves, it has nothing to do with sex” (ibid., 27/25). Or is the term “*a*-sexual” simply not to be understood in the same way as “asexual,” implying instead a form of sexuality that is dependent on object *a*?

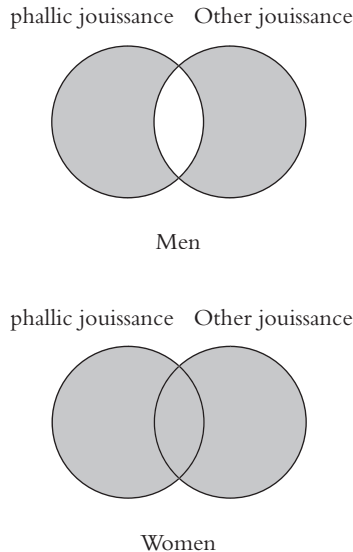
Leaving these questions in abeyance, the idea here seems to be that one *can* experience this Other jouissance, though one cannot say anything about it because it is ineffable; just because it does not exist does not mean one cannot experience it: one’s experience of it simply ex-sists. I do not think that Lacan is saying that everyone who has the ability to experience it actually experiences it; rather, not all women experience it. Lacan is certainly not saying that a woman *has* to experience it to obtain psychic health, and that women who do not are somehow “unhealthy” or “abnormal”—indeed, such terms are truly rare in Lacan’s discourse, no matter what the context.

One crucial difference between men and women, structurally defined, then seems to be that women do not have to renounce phallic jouissance to have Other jouissance: they can have the Other jouissance without giving up their phallic jouissance. They can have *both* this homosexual jouissance—

related to object *a*, and not to their partners as such—and the Other jouissance as well (Seminar XX, 78/84). For men, on the other hand, it seems to be an either/or. Does this reintroduce a fantasy dating back at least as far as Ovid, who has Tiresias say that a woman's enjoyment is greater than a man's?

In any case, this is what Lacan seems to mean by “sexuation”: a man is someone who, regardless of chromosomes, can have one or the other (or at least thinks he can have the other by giving up the one), but not both; a woman is someone who, regardless of chromosomes, can potentially have both.<sup>21</sup>

**FIGURE 1.5**

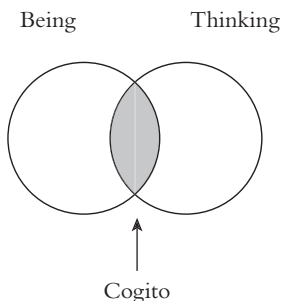


Note that, since “man” and “woman” in this discussion do not correspond to male and female, Lacan’s discussions about relations between men and women can apply equally well to what are more conventionally referred to as “homosexual” relations, “homosexual” without the two m’s. In female homosexuality, both partners could come under feminine structure, masculine structure, or one of each; the same goes for male homosexuality. There does not seem to me to be anything specific about homosexual object choice that immediately situates someone on one side or the other of Figure 1.4.

## SUBJECT AND OTHER

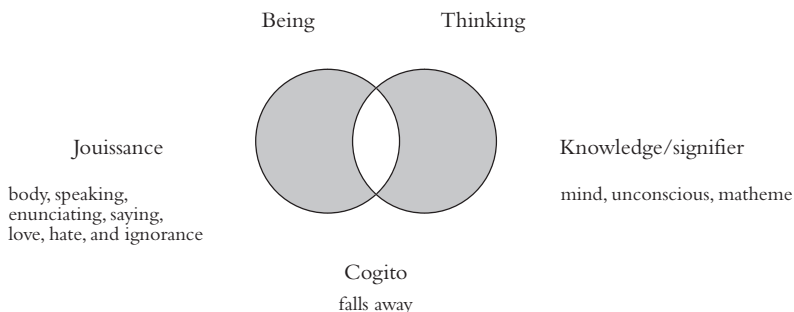
For years, Lacan had been saying that the psychoanalytic subject was everything the Cartesian subject was not: if the cogito was the intersection between being and thinking,

FIGURE 1.6



the Lacanian subject was being in one place (imaginary or, perhaps, real), thinking in another (unconscious), with no overlap between them.

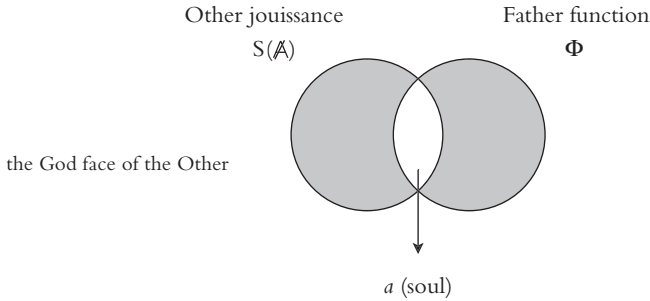
FIGURE 1.7



We can modify that a bit here on the basis of Lacan's formulation: "The discordance between knowledge and being is our subject" (Seminar XX, 109/120). Since he tells us, "There's no such thing as a knowing subject," I think we are justified in situating the cogito—the knowing subject *par excellence*—as what falls out between the two ("I am thinking, therefore [I *know* that] I am").

What, then, of the Other? Lacan makes it sound here like a similar disjunction is involved. There seem to be two faces of the Other: the locus of the signifier (which Lacan associates here with the father function) and "the God face . . . based on feminine jouissance" (Seminar XX, 71/77). Prior to the early 1970s, the Other is always very distinct from affect or jouissance in Lacan's work, it being the locus of the signifier, object *a* being associated with jouissance. But here the concept of the Other becomes a disjunction of these two radically opposed terms. Just as there are two faces of the subject, here there seem to be two faces of the Other. This may be where *lalangue*, whereby jouissance is "injected," so to speak, into the unconscious—that is, into the Other—comes in.

FIGURE 1.8



What drops out between the two? I would suggest that it is the soul, which seems to be associated here by Lacan with object  $a$ . (Soullove is love, not of the Other, but of object  $a$ ).

### CONCLUSION

Is Lacan providing something new and useful here? It is often hard to say what exactly in analysts' discourse should be characterized as indicative of the Other jouissance. On the other hand, we hear about the *idea* or *ideal* of an un-failing, infallible jouissance every day in analytic work. The gulf between the two is as palpable in clinical practice as in everyday discourse and the media. One need not endorse Lacan's account of masculine and feminine structure to agree with the idea that there are two quite different jouissances.

Has Lacan introduced all kinds of fantasies of his own in this theorization of jouissance? The same old fantasies? Perhaps *disjunction* is the most important term here.

Whatever the case may be, the fantasy of the whole that Lacan attempts to debunk is alive and well in many disciplines today. To give but one example, E. O. Wilson, the renowned sociobiologist, recently published a book, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, in which he suggests that, using methods developed in the *natural sciences*, science will eventually be able to explain everything: psychology, literature, the arts, history, sociology, and religion—the whole kit and caboodle. The theory of the whole still has a considerable hold on us!

### NOTES

1. An earlier version of this chapter was delivered as a paper on April 17, 1998, at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, at the invitation of Professor Briankle Chang of the Department of Communications.

2. Lacan might say that affect takes refuge in the body, the body as a representational site of the unconscious.

3. The latter often goes by the name of object  $a$ .

4. All references to *Écrits* here are to the French edition (Paris: Seuil, 1966), the pagination of which is provided in the margins of the new translation of *Écrits: A Selection* by Bruce Fink.

5. Page references are first to the French edition of Seminar XX, *Encore* (Paris: Seuil, 1975) and then, after a slash, to the English translation, *The Seminar, Book XX, Encore, On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998).

6. What are we to make, then, of machines that read aloud written texts or computer files? The absence of selective stress (other than programmed) on different words or clauses in such reading would seem to point, at the very least, to the absence of the subject of enunciation (or enunciating subject)—that is, to the absence of the subject of jouissance.

7. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 125.

8. See my detailed commentary on “Subversion of the Subject” in *Lacan à la lettre: Reading Écrits Closely* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

9. In literary theory, for example, one must take into account the structures of the text, but also what Barthes calls the “pleasure of the text” (and their interrelations). In other words, one must consider the pleasure of the reader and the writer, as well as the performative aspects of the text. We should, of course, do the same in psychoanalysis, considering that the field is defined not only by a practice that is passed on from analyst to analysand but also by a series of texts that are read and reread.

10. According to Lacan, it also is found in Jean Piaget’s work on children; see his comments on Piaget in “Science and Truth” (*Écrits*, 859–60).

11. *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1972), p. 99; in English, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), pp. 66–67. Note that Saussure’s language often is suggestive of a sexual relationship between the signifier and the signified: “they are intimately united” (*Cours*, 99); there is a “coupling of thought [the signified] with phonic matter [the signifier]” (*Cours*, 156); and “Phonic substance [the signifier] is . . . not a mold whose forms thought [the signified] must necessarily marry” (*Cours*, 155).

12. For a far more detailed account of Lacan’s subversion of Saussure, see my commentary in *Lacan à la lettre: Reading Écrits Closely* (forthcoming).

13. The very rigidity of the distinction I have drawn between these two subjects may seem problematic and susceptible of deconstruction. Don’t these two concepts themselves form a unified, unitary, binary structure, not so dissimilar to Saussure’s conception of the sign? And doesn’t Lacan further polarize the binary nature of the structure with his notion of the One and the Other, the Other as always and inescapably Other, in the 1970s?

This rigid binary opposition may perhaps be understood to be thrown into question by another concept that Lacan introduces in the early 1970s, *lalangue*, or language—for it seems to inject jouissance into the unconscious, that is, the Other—or by writing, for “what is written are the conditions of jouissance and what is counted are the remainders” of jouissance (Seminar XX, 118/131). But as I have not introduced these concepts here, I will not attempt to resolve the opposition, confining myself to pointing out the possibility. The notion of the subject as a disjunction, to which I turn further on, may help here as well—the subject as a disjunction between signifier and affect.



14. He says the same for the Stoics regarding material implication, the deduction of the true from the false (Seminar XX, 56/60).

15. Perhaps the stereotypical cigarette smoked after sex in movies nevertheless points to a recognized lack in that jouissance, there being something more to be desired: an oral pleasure that has gone unsatisfied.

16. See, for example, my *Lacanian Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), chapter 8.

17. Whether there is any point in defining men and women at all is, of course, an open question.

18. Here it would seem that the bar, rather than serving as the copula or means of copulation, as we might view it in Saussure's model of the "coupling" of the signifier and signified, serves instead as a barrier.

19. That is true of my partner as well; in my relation to my partner, "I ask [her]," as Lacan says, "to refuse what I offer [her] because that's not it" (Seminar XX, 101/111).

20. We could, perhaps, also read the upper left-hand formula as asserting that there exists something in him that wishes to make that sacrifice, to give up phallic jouissance, in the hope of finding "true love."

21. If we think of phallic jouissance as the satisfaction that corresponds to desire—and the terms  $\$$  and  $a$  are there (in the table under the formulas of sexuation) that form fantasy that Lacan says props up desire—then a man can desire his partner, or love his partner, but not both at the same time, whereas a woman can do both. Is this a fair account of what Lacan is saying? If it is, it would seem to point to what we might call a *love beyond desire*—equivalent to what Lacan jokingly refers to here as a jouissance beyond the phallus. If so, it would seem to correspond to what Lacan qualifies in the last chapter of the seminar as a "subject-to-subject relationship" (Seminar XX, 131–32/144), in which the object drops out:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} (\$ \diamond a \diamond \$) & \rightarrow & (\$ \diamond \$) \\ \text{[homosexual desire]} & & \text{[love]} \end{array}$$

But that might be going too far: it would, perhaps, be safer to say that a man is able to attain one kind of love *or* the other (love for the object or for the Other sex) with one and the same partner, whereas a woman is able to attain both kinds of love with the same partner (or phallic jouissance with a man and the Other jouissance with a woman or feminine instance?). I am obviously extrapolating here, since Lacan never says with one and the same partner.

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